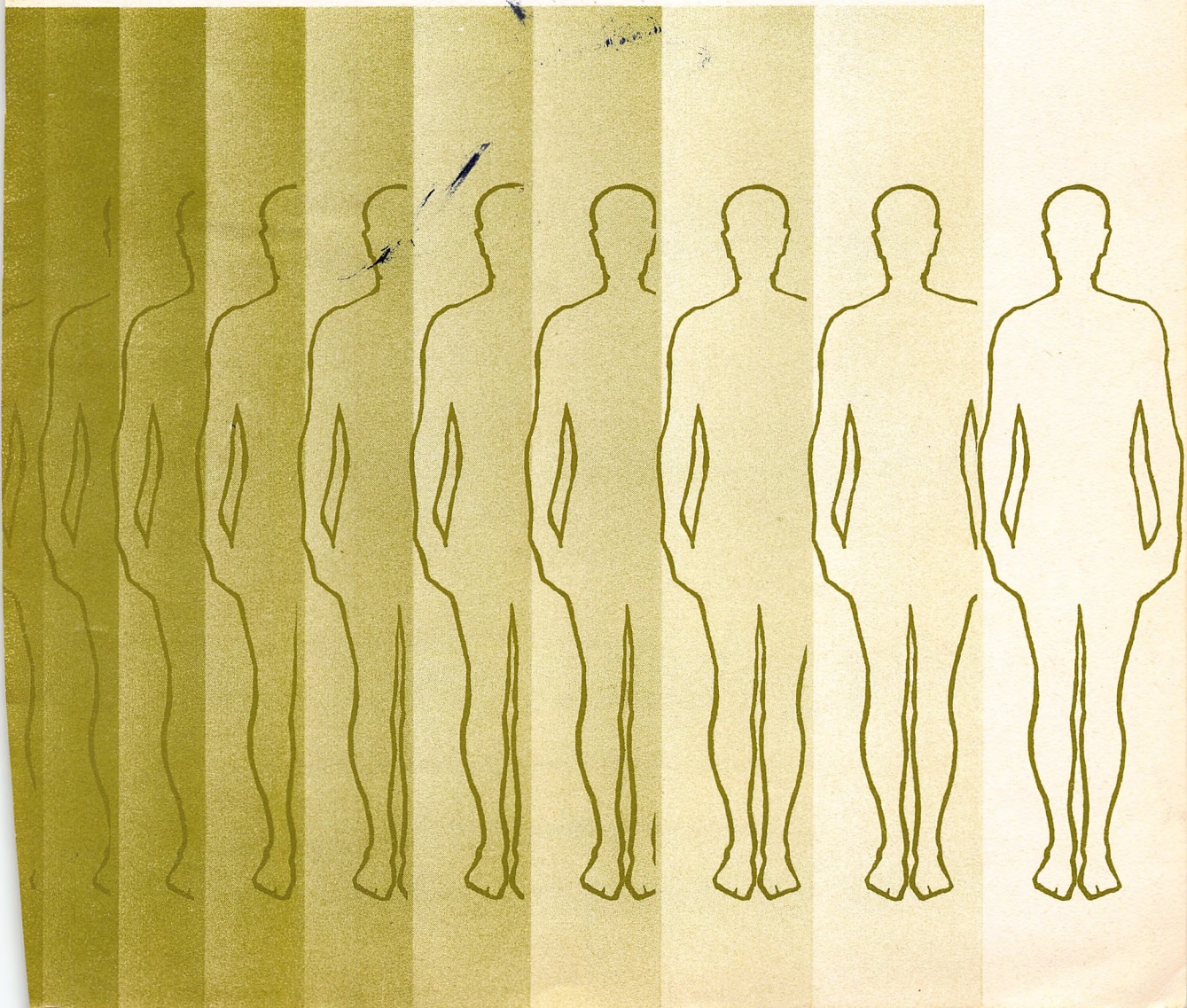


TEN STEPS TO SELF- FULFILLMENT

By Robert G. Chaney

STEP 2

Know Your Inner Potentials



Illustrations by Teodors Liliensteins

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TEN STEPS TO SELF-FULFILLMENT

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STEP 2

THE SECOND VITAL IDEA:

Know Your Inner Potentials

Do either chemicals or electronic energies possess intelligence? Of course not. Thus, matter is not life but an expression of life.

Your vital potentials do not lie in the tissues, bones, organs and nerves of your physical body but in something that animates these physical components -- your Self. Hidden in the deep recesses of your Self are potentials which tragically lie dormant in most persons. But you can discover what they are and how to bring them to the surface of your life.

If you believe you are capable of "doing better" and believe you can improve your present life, you have already taken a step toward realization of the second Vital Idea.

Many believe sincerely that they are now doing their utmost. Unfortunately those who so believe are creating the very limitations which doom them to lives of frustration and mediocrity.

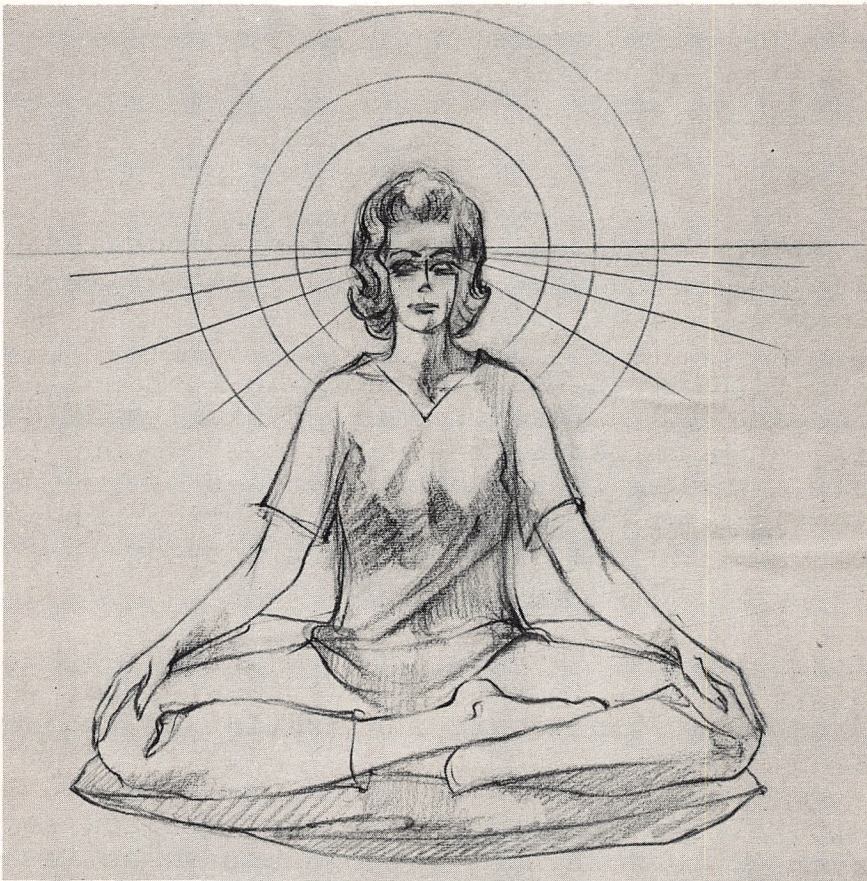
You can improve your life by learning of the potentials you possess, by learning what you will be able to do in the future that you cannot do now, and thereby controlling a considerable portion of your destiny.

You possess inner resources of mind and spirit which are little known in the world. Yet the men who have become masters have discovered many of these potentials and used them to achieve remarkable goals in

their lives. Is there any reason why you should not use these same potentials?

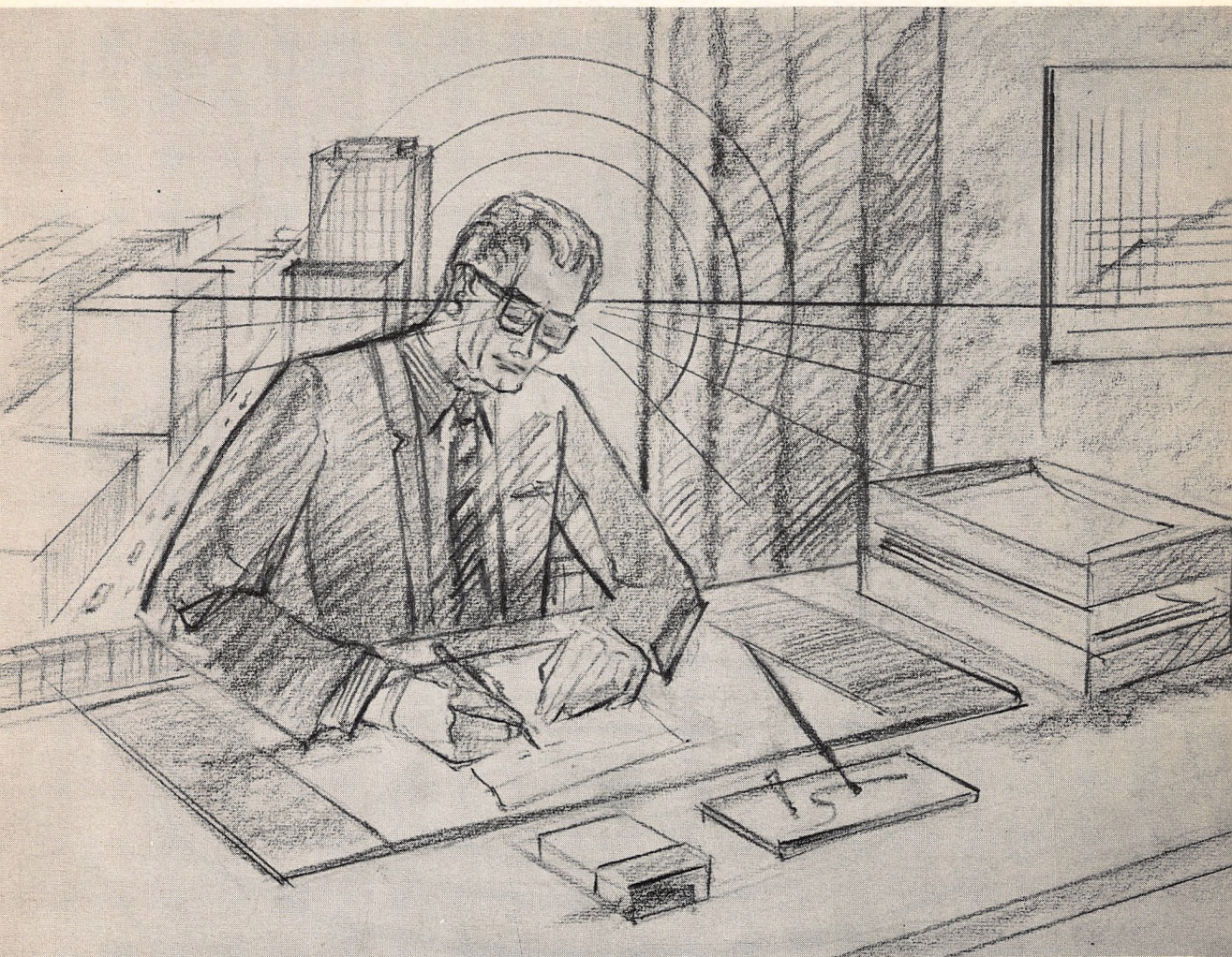
The process of doing so is an aspect of mysticism. The practice of mysticism, among other things, is the practice of communication and expression between the inner world of your Self and the outer world in which it expresses.

There are two kinds of mysticism. One we might call idealistic mysticism, and the other practical mysticism. Both serve their purposes.



IDEALISTIC MYSTICISM

Idealistic mysticism creates a state which can best be described as reverie. It is a kind of bliss which results in attunement with the Infinite. It creates an inner feeling in which the person lives, at least for a few moments, beyond the plane of men and things as though in another world entirely, truly a dimension beyond space and time. It has many practical values too, but they are not always well defined or observable. We will consider them later.



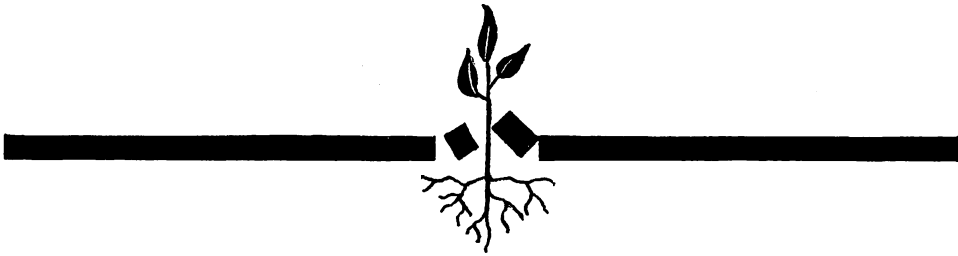
PRACTICAL MYSTICISM

Practical mysticism is what the world searches for. It unites the two worlds in a more observable and functional way that deals directly with the requirements of everyday life. This kind of mysticism composes the greater portion of these lessons.

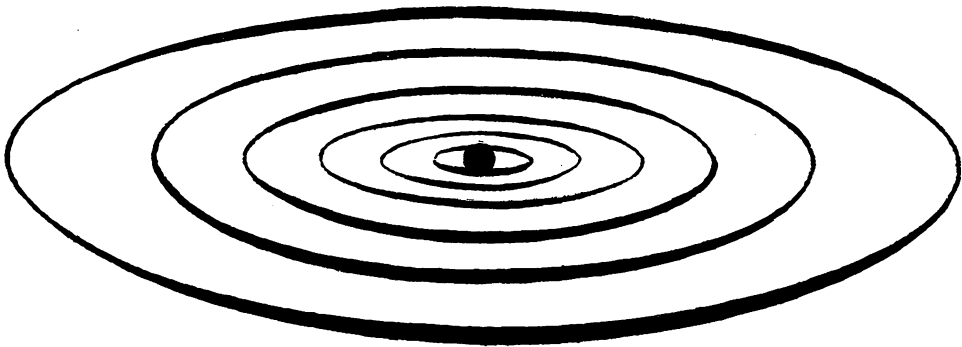
Actually the two kinds of mysticism are interblended and connected, like the floors of a large building. The penthouse on the top floor represents idealistic mysticism, and all the floors beneath where work is conducted represents practical mysticism. On these various levels of everyday life, where your inner potentials are summoned to activity, you achieve the goals toward which you direct them.

All the elements necessary for both idealistic and practical mysticism are present within you now. No one can tell what all these potentials really are. But

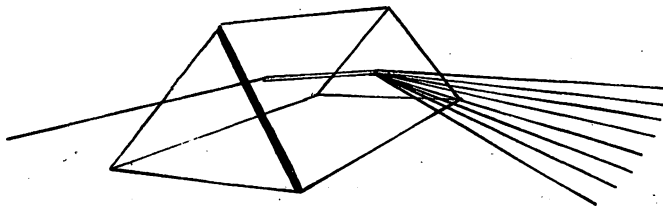
here is a brief list of some of them that may serve as a guide. Within you now are the following potentials, grouped for reasons that will be explained in a moment:



1. the potentials for growth, preservation and longevity;



2. the potentials for being a center of unity with all life, and a contact point with the Infinite;



3. the potentials of extra senses beyond the physical; potentials for creativity and stability.

Now let's look at these potentials in the light of a remarkable six line poem by an author who is unknown to me:

*Within me is the sum of all things past;
Within me are the years that yet remain;
And Heaven has not a space too high nor vast
That I may not within myself contain;
Nor is there an accomplishment divine
That is not slumbering in this soul of mine.*

These words describe the unlimited nature of all the potentials you possess. They tell you what you are in a latent or inactive state, and suggest what you could be actively. They are an inspirational guide to the vast possibilities you can express in your everyday life, beginning even at the very moment you read this lesson.

Let's put the poem and the potentials together. The first two lines of the poem pertain to time, and so do the potentials in group 1.

YOU CAN TRANSCEND TIME

*Within me is the sum of all things past;
Within me are the years that yet remain.*

These two lines pertain to your association with time in the eternal present. And the first group of potentials -- growth, preservation and longevity -- also relate to time.

You possess the potential for growth. Physically, the incorporation of your vital life in physical form resulted in the arrangement and multiplication of cells so that your body grew from a single cell to its present size.

But as you already know there are other kinds of growth. There is growth in knowledge, the accumulation of facts. There is growth in wisdom and understanding, the application of facts.

The first two lines of the poem point out that all the experiences of your present life are stored in the electronic force field of which your memory, conscious or unconscious, is composed. Of equal importance is the fact that in this same force field is the accumulation of experiences acquired in the life of your Self before it entered incarnation in your present life.

Perhaps these experiences were gained during your life in another dimension before coming to earth. Perhaps during another life on earth. Both are possible. It was Henry Ford who said, "I could not have learned all I know in one lifetime." He was not being egotistical; he was stating his sincere belief about living on earth more than once.

And the seeds of future growth in knowledge, wisdom and understanding are also present in your Self. It is difficult to describe them specifically. At best, and it is poor enough, they might be described as affinities that will impel you toward future experiences in which you will acquire inner growth as a being, a fulfillment of your Self.

To activate this potential, you might pause a moment right now. Turn within mentally and direct your higher consciousness to lead you, in the future, to those experiences for which you have a personal affinity and which will contribute to your growth in knowledge, wisdom and understanding. As an experiment, do this simple exercise daily for a month and note the results in new experiences and associations that become meaningful to you.

You have the potential for preservation. Physically, the vital life of your Self has preserved life in your body, including the life in every one of its trillions of cells, for a period of years.

In other areas, the mental for example, the ability to preserve knowledge is obvious. Remember that in lesson 1, when we studied the nature of your Self by examining its characteristics, we included the fact that the Self was wise. In that lesson it was said, "Incorporate in the Self is the wisdom of the ages. It has appropriated into its mind level the experiences of countless centuries, and perhaps experiences in many solar systems."

Don't be too quick to say, "This doesn't apply to me. I can't remember anything." Remembering is an act of recalling something from your memory storehouse. The memory is there whatever the degree of your proficiency at recalling it.

And in still another area, experiments have been conducted in what is known as the crystallization of flowers. As you know, a flower, either cut or still rooted in soil, will in time wither and decay. The experimenter cups his hands around a blossom so it is

surrounded by radiations emanating from the palms. You can feel some of these radiations for yourself in the form of heat. At the same time he centers his attention on the flower and mentally reinforces the radiations with the thought that the blossom will continue to express life. Remarkable results have occurred. Flowers have lived long past their normal life span, and even cut flowers have retained their color over periods of years. If you will attempt this simple experiment you are quite apt to discover one aspect of the preservation potential you possess.

To apply this same principle to a circumstance you wish to prolong, remember that circumstances also wither and decay just as flowers do; and they also react to the same kind of "life-infusion" under your mental direction.

You have the potential for longevity. Nothing is longer lived than your Self. To a group of detractors who were attempting to limit the Christ's potentials even more than their own, he said, "Before Abraham was, I am." He was illustrating for them the vital fact that man is an eternal being beyond the limits of days and years, beyond the gyrations of the earth around the sun.

The Self's knowledge that it lives forever becomes expressed in the lower dimension of man's normal consciousness by his efforts to prolong as well as preserve life. His efforts to prolong life in his present dimension have not met with spectacular success, though in modern times he lives considerably longer than he once did. But the possibility, the potential, is present. Some day he will learn how consciously to continue the infusion of vital life into his physical form so that body cells do not age. Then he will remain on earth as long as he wishes, but by then perhaps his desire to do so will be tempered with greater understanding and he will wish to do so only for reasons not yet known to us.

From a practical day by day viewpoint, the potentials of growth, preservation and longevity merit a place in your consideration even now. If your age is more advanced, wouldn't you like to be as vigorous as you were ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago? Or if you are young, wouldn't you like to maintain your vitality to an advanced age?

Dr. F. James Conway, a medical research scientist at the University of Michigan told a meeting of the

American College Sports Medicine Society that *there is no apparent medical reason why man should lose the capacity for vigorous physical exercise as he grows older.*

If there is no medical reason then what is the cause? Dr. Conway thinks, as I do, that it is principally mental. As we grow older we tend to lose our mental interests and vitality. Our bodies reflect the attitudes in our minds. We begin "to take it easy" simply because we don't have to be vigorous, and the body begins to lose the vitality which the mind once supplied it.

Remember the flower experiment in which you mentally directed vitality to the flower and prolonged its life? The attitude of your mind is constantly either invigorating or devitalizing the cells of your body and all its organs.

Dr. Conway says that even heart diseases and deterioration, and lung ailments, are not necessarily related to age. His research indicates that the way to stay young is to think young. The way to preserve and prolong life is to couple "thinking young" with "doing young." Don't resign to existence; live life actively. Couple reasonable physical exercise (certainly not abuse or punishment of your body) with mental exercise. That's the formula for a long, active life.

But just how do you "think young"?

Two principles that will help you think young are animation and personification, which I mentioned near the close of our first lesson.

"To gain the kingdom," said the Christ, "become as a little child." Now to become as a child is not to retreat to immaturity, but to use with maturity the principles a child uses before he begins to lose the inherent vitality of his mind.

"I don't want to die," wrote a child to his teacher. "I'd get tired of it." If we will be mature enough to admit it to ourselves, we really get tired of living. That's the problem, and there's no need for it.

A child treats a teddybear as though it were a living thing. He names it, converses with it, and with it he enters into all kinds of imaginary but lifelike situations. To him it has both life and distinct per-

sonality. He animates and personifies it.

To the situations in your life toward which you have become jaded or resigned, including even personal relationships, you can do precisely the same thing. By your mental attitude toward them, you can renew the vital life they are losing.

For a moment think of a situation toward which you've lost interest. In your imagination begin speaking to it as though it were a living thing. Begin changing it, rearranging it, spicing it with renewed vitality. Continue for several moments. Now hasn't your interest perked up? Don't you feel a flow of energy through both your mind and body? You are animating and personifying as the child does, and at the same time you are accomplishing the result Dr. Conway said you could.

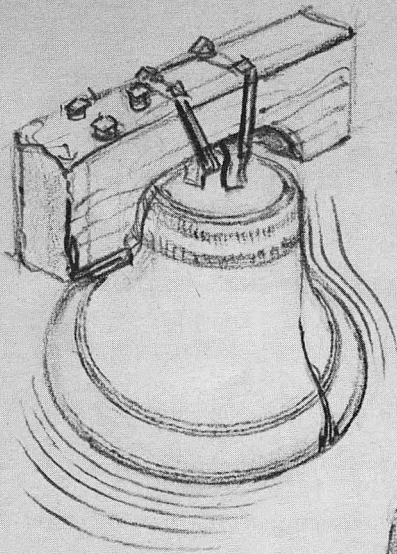
Above everything else in this course, remember one thing. There is nothing so potent as the power of an idea. Nations and religions and industrial empires are created and sustained on ideas, and often very simple ones. And so is vital personal life.

I remember my grandmother taking care of my grandfather in his old age. She was a dynamo of energy and unbelievable strength. When he died she deteriorated immediately. She kept vigorous and strong several years through the vitality of her interest. When the interest was no longer needed her strength suddenly disappeared.

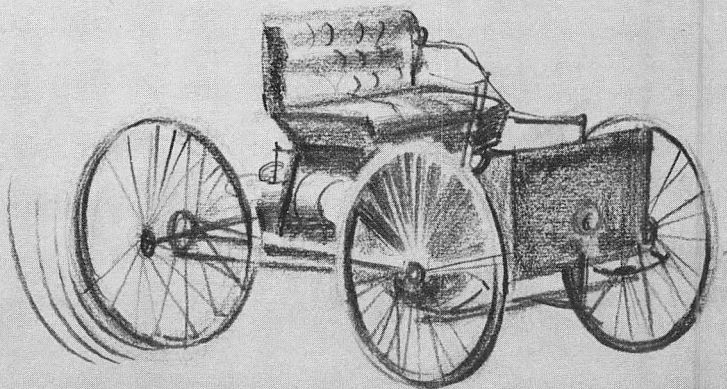
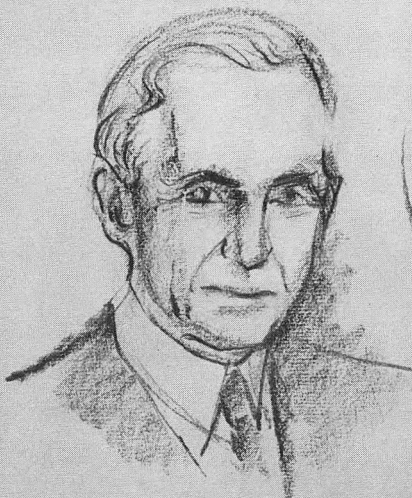
Sometimes interest has to be created deliberately. I have a very dear friend 73 years old. With time on her hands and little to do she began to lose vitality. She began to study lip reading via a television course. She wasn't aware of the fact that vitality was returning to her physical body, but I could see the change.

Another friend, in her 80's, began to study the piano, something she had wanted to do since girlhood. The radiation of her personality became that of a young woman.

I have another friend who tells me he expects to live to be 200 years old. He is in his late 80's. Perhaps he will not make it. But on the day he told me this he had walked over six miles to church! I asked why he had walked, and he simply said that the topic on which I was speaking that day had roused a challenge and he wanted to meet it!



Nations and religions and industrial empires are created and sustained on ideas, and often very simple ones. And so is vital personal life.



Remember, the more your mind dwells upon the qualities of strength, beauty, creativity, courage, realization of goals, noble ideas, spiritual qualities, and other positive attributes, the more vitalizing impetus you give the life force in you. You release a constructive and sustaining power to your own inner life force. You keep the "clock" wound instead of allowing it to run down. You keep yourself centered in the moving flow of cosmic energy instead of coming to rest in stagnant pools by the wayside.

"Within me is the sum of all things past; within me are the years that yet remain." So growth, preservation and longevity, your inner potentials concerned with time, are an important part of this second Vital Idea. But time is only one aspect of life. There are other potentials that will contribute to your vital life in still another area.

YOU CAN TRANSCEND SPACE

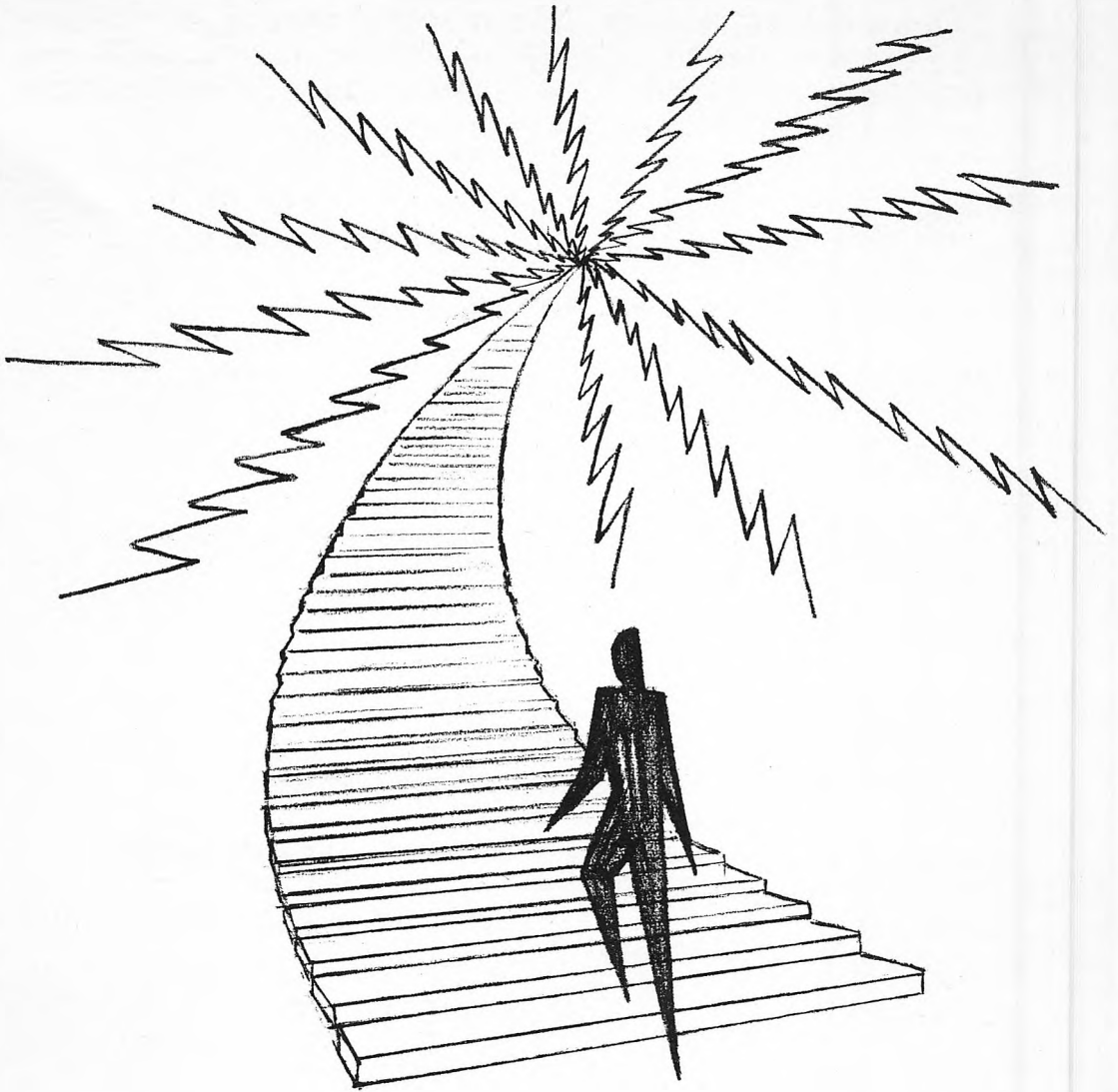
*And heaven has not a space too high nor vast;
That I may not within myself contain.*

Man seems to be limited to the confines of his physical self, a separate entity without connection to any other living thing. The truth is that we all range outside our physical limitations without even realizing it. Identical twins on opposite sides of the earth are often aware of each other's emotions, pains, joys, and other experiences. They are experiencing a unity with each other that certainly transcends space.

You possess the potential of being a center of unity with all life. This potential transcends space.

As an illustration of this fact, many parents need only a reminder of the sense of oneness they frequently experience with their children. Our life is usually a center of unity with life which is present in another person. But it is possible to find this unity of life with non-human forms as well.

In lesson 4, *Know Your Relationship With the Infinite*, I will tell you of the unusual experience I once had of becoming aware, in my own consciousness, of the limited degree of consciousness present in the banana tree that grows beside our home. I cannot describe how deeply this experience made me aware of the unity of all life in a way that will forever be meaningful to me.



You possess the potential of being a center of unity with all life.

MYSTICISM IN HUMAN RELATIONS

There are probably hundreds of material plane objectives that can be accomplished in one's everyday life through the practice of mysticism. This opinion might not be shared by some of the great mystics who seek only spiritual attainment, or the practice of idealistic mysticism. But to me it is a significant and important consideration among the many aspects of mysticism. It is, in other words, simply the practice of practical mysticism.

I believe that one of the greatest values of mysticism lies in the area of human relations. There is probably not one person who does not have some unsatisfactory personal relationship with one or more individuals...some area of misunderstanding.

For example: A man told me he had left his family. He recounted a long list of grievances he had with them and they with him. Thus a vast gulf was created and, as a result, he said he was putting his family out of his life. Now the question is...can he really separate himself from his family? Won't they still exist in his mind? Can one truly separate himself from others? I don't think so.

So it seems to me, for this and many other reasons, that the nature of personal relationships can be affected through the practice of mysticism. And one of the important points is:

Each is a part of the Whole. One person cannot be separated from another in a cosmic sense. There still remains an interchange of emotion and thought even though individuals are, for one reason or another, removed from each other.

Very possibly there are times when physical separation of one person from another is the only solution to a critical problem. It is my opinion, however, that it is only a temporary solution and, perhaps in the centuries to come, must sometime be solved on a more permanent basis.

You possess the potential of being a contact point for Infinite life. You are a projection of the Infinite in physical form. To live and act in a state of awareness of the Infinite life present in you enables your Self to reach a new height of self-expression. The many remarkable benefits that accrue from learning about this potential, and using it, are explored in lesson 4, *Know Your Relationship With the Infinite.*

For the present, let us accept the poet's observation that *"Heaven has not a space too high nor vast that I may not within myself contain."* In your Self is the potential to transcend space, be it physical, mental or spiritual. And it also contains unlimited potentials of accomplishment.

YOU CAN TRANSCEND YOUR PRESENT LIMITATIONS

*Nor is there an accomplishment divine
That is not slumbering in this soul of mine.*

This is a staggering statement. It doesn't mean that with a little meditation and by repeating a few affirmations you can become anything you wish. It says that a remarkable potential is present in you. It is slumbering. It is inactive until you begin to bring it to a state of fulfillment.

Each of us activates only a small portion of this potential in a lifetime. But each of us activates some portion of it.

These last two lines of the poem pertain to expression of the specific potentials you choose to bring to the surface of your life. If life is to be worthwhile it must be a process of continuously going beyond ourselves. To be the same person over and over again is pretty pointless.

There are three aspects of the expression potential which contribute most to Self-fulfillment:

1. Extrasensory perception
2. Creativity
3. Stability

Remember that in lesson 1 it was stated that the Self is "a center through which something flows into all the universe." Whatever flows from your consciousness must first have entered it. And much that enters it does so through what the mystic William Blake termed "the doors of perception." Blake said: *If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.*

You possess the potential for extrasensory perception.

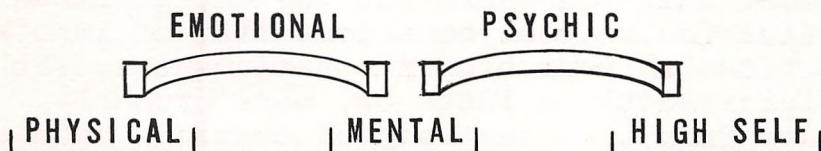
There are two general aspects to extrasensory perception:

1. functional -- "leadings" which help direct you into beneficial circumstances; "strengthenings" which reinforce your inner qualities (such as the quality of courage);

2. cognitive -- which supplies you with exact information about a specific subject or idea, circumstance or person.

I have written at length about these two aspects in a series of three lessons published by Astara on the subjects of Intuition, Clairvoyance and Psychometry. The lessons explain in detail the various methods for increasing your ability to use the extrasensory potentials you possess.

You really live in three worlds: physical, mental and spiritual. There are connections between these worlds which unite them, just as bridges might connect three bodies of land separated by rivers. The bridge between the physical and the mental is the emotional. The bridge between the mental and the spiritual is the psychic. In a diagram it would look like this.



Being the central point of control, your mind impulses cross over the emotional bridge to affect and control your body. Your mind crosses the psychic bridge to meet and receive impulses from your higher Self. It is only when the bridges are well established and controlled that you become a complete fivefold being, functioning as a complete unit.

What your mind receives from the High Self may be either functional or cognitive, or both. For instance it may be either a feeling of assurance about a situation, or exact knowledge about an idea, or both.

In either event, one of the most important aspects of your being is your psychic nature, or the bridge between your High Self and your normal conscious mind. To develop your extrasensory ability is to enlarge the causeway for traffic between the two.

You possess the potential for creativity. If you are truly in "the image of God" you come nearer expressing that likeness by being creative than in any other way.

To be creative is to do more than originate an idea that no one else has ever thought of before. Or, for example, to paint an original picture. There are creative business men, scientists, doctors, housewives,

educators, builders, and so on through the entire range of human endeavors. Most of them agree that creativity is a spontaneous expression that seems to come from nowhere. But there must be a source.

Creative expression originates in the High Self, crosses the bridge to meet the receptive mind, and is then put into expression by that mind.

"All great men are intuitive," said Dr. Garabed Paelian, a research scientist at Bell Laboratories for many years. You can be creative too if you will learn how your conscious mind receives ideas from outside itself.

Acceptance is the key word. Accept the impulses from your High Self.

Remember that ideas are but the materialization or solidification in your conscious mind of impulses that were first in your higher consciousness. It either originated these ideas or, more probably, plucked them from the great sea of cosmic wisdom that resides everywhere in the universe. In this sea of cosmic wisdom there lies not only a fund of general ideas, awaiting your ability to use them, but also the answers to everyday problems.

As a modern mystic, you may learn to sit in quiet contemplation and observe the mind at work. If you do, you will soon discover that much comes into the mind from outside itself. Waves of thought-force enter the mind bringing with them on their currents of mental energy a new thought -- one which has come from some other mind or which has been dormant in the Cosmic Mind.

Some call this process intuition. To others it is an expression of a "sixth sense." Some accept it simply as a "hunch."

These sudden expressions in consciousness may occur in spontaneous and entirely unexpected moments, or you may become aware of them during quiet and reflective times. They lead you to an understanding of the workings of a subliminal or non-conscious portion of your mind, and in other instances help you to become aware of a distinctly higher plane of consciousness which descends into and diffuses throughout your own.

As a contemplative mystic, you will also realize that thought-waves and idea-currents become part of

your own consciousness level to a greater degree when you accept them and saturate your own consciousness with them. Otherwise they are rejected as unacceptable and less frequently touch the surface of your conscious awareness. Then you become aware of them only under extreme conditions.

Remember...acceptance increases expression of the fact that in addition to your own thoughts you have available a literal treasure house of ideas, especially in the unlimited source of the Cosmic Mind.

You possess the potential for stability. You will recall that in lesson 1 we discussed the need for Self identity. The "computerization" of the world today leads to loss of that identity, and the result of such loss is the feeling of instability. A friend recently described the state of her life to me with the words "I'm confused."

In this period of transition in the world there are many changing values, conflicts of ideology, revisions of foundations, from the international level to the personal. A basis of stability is necessary if we are to keep our balance and poise in face of the drastic changes now in process. There is no stability in the outer world. Stability can only come from within.

Stability is a quality of Self that remains constant in spite of outer changes in one's life. It is not rigidity, but firmness. You acquire it from a realization of the unchanging nature of your Self, which is a personal portion of the unchanging nature of the Infinite, or God.

Each time you heighten your awareness of your Self you transmit a portion of the Self's stability to your conscious mind...and thus become more a center of stability in the changing world in which you live. This is the "rock" on which you build the tabernacle of your life.

The stability of which I speak, remember, is not rigidity. It is a defense against undesirable change and retrogression. Some change is good. The kind of stability we seek might be termed "dynamic stability." It is the knowledge that reserve power, strength and understanding are available at your mental call. You can meet the troubles and struggles of everyday life with some measure of tranquility, reinforced by your contact with the higher dimensions of your own being and with the Infinite, when you mentally seek this

response from your Self.

An enigmatic sentence in the Bible states: "I am that I am." A truer translation of this sentence is: "I am that which I will be." It means that from the stable foundation of what you are -- an eternal spiritual being -- you may progress to become whatever you will yourself to be. This illustrates what I mean by dynamic stability and fulfills the essence of what the poet was describing when he wrote:

*Nor is there an accomplishment divine
That is not slumbering in this soul of mine.*

Now, to learn how to focalize these potentials of the Self into a working method of life, let us learn a lesson from the Mexican jumping bean.

WHAT THE MEXICAN JUMPING BEAN TEACHES US

The Mexican jumping bean is a small nut-like bean just a little larger than a coffee bean. It grows on swamp trees and, if you hold one in your hand for a few moments, from time to time it twitches or "jumps."

Living inside the bean is a tiny worm. And in that worm's consciousness is the knowledge that he wasn't meant to be a worm but something more. So he doubles back inside his hard-shelled prison and throws himself against the opposite side of the little cavity in which he exists. The force of the blow makes the bean jump. He repeats the process over and over until finally the shell is cracked and he emerges.

Next, in the process of fulfilling his destiny (the potentials of his Self) he becomes a moth and flies away. But that doesn't complete the process!

As a moth he returns to one of the trees from which he came and deposits an egg in a blossom. The blossom closes on the egg and in time three new beans are created. Two of these pods contain seeds from which new trees may in time be born. The third pod contains a larva from which another worm develops to repeat the entire process.

The entire round is remarkable. A tree, plant life, sends forth its fruit not only to reproduce itself but also to enter the animal kingdom, the worm. In turn its potentials enable it to enter a still higher form of animal life, the moth. The moth deposits

the egg which helps create more plant life. Whether you wish to designate this as a form of reincarnation, or simple creativity of nature, you must agree that it is a unique illustration of the fulfillment of potentials.

The lesson to be learned? Here is an example of what you can do in your higher dimension of life. The worm in the bean was determined to be what he would be. He was determined to (1) escape from his limitations in the bean and (2) function in the higher world of the moth. And the entire process was begun by the tree's potential to deliver itself from its limitations in the plant kingdom.

What does it mean to you and your life?

It means that you can become more than you are. You will not change to some higher form of life but you can express higher aspects of your present being. You can be that which you will be. You can arouse and stimulate your potentials into activity.

Can you ask yourself some penetrating questions and give yourself honest answers? If you can, then ask this: Is there some aspect of my life, something about my work, some personal relationship, about which my consciousness is crystallized?

Can I exert the effort to break through this crystallization like the tiny bit of life in the Mexican jumping bean bursts through his?

Can I continue to put pressure on my present limitations by calling on the higher resources I possess till the shell cracks and I become a greater being than I am at this moment?

Exactly what can I do?

These are questions you must answer for yourself. But I can give you some suggestions that will help you activate the potentials residing in your Self.

Some of the greatest revealers of what man can accomplish have not been the great prophets, though they have pointed the way in relation to man's more spiritual potentials. The greatest prophets of man's potentials in the fields of human endeavor have been, of all people, comic strip and science fiction writers. They put man in outer space two generations before it

actually happened. Right now they are revealing what man will do 20 years from now.

What they are actually revealing is the potential man possesses in the field of space science.

Let's go to another field. An artist paints a picture. It is a thing of beauty. The artist has put on canvas the reflection of the potential that is present in himself.

Whatever you do, even the humblest task, can be done better if your inner potentials for extrasensory perception, creativity and stability are brought to the foreground of your life. But what starts the chain reaction that accomplishes this?

WHAT "TRIGGERS" YOUR INSPIRATION?

Strangely enough, some of the factors that activate inspiration do not seem to be at all related to inspiration. But before we study them, let's define the kind of inspiration we are discussing.

We are not dealing with the quality of simply being enthused. Rather, our interest is in the qualities of thought and creativity which are above normal conscious thinking. Intuition, sixth sense, the creative flash, inspired revelation are among them. These are the qualities you want to incorporate in your life and which are, collectively, discussed at this point under the general classification of inspiration.

There are five "activators" of inspiration to be discussed in this lesson. They are:

1. Awareness
2. Attention
3. Meditation
4. Breath
5. Brain stimulation

Awareness is the simple acceptance of the fact that you can receive inspiration about any subject or situation you may wish to designate.

Attention is centering your mind upon a specific subject or situation.

Both of these factors interblend and focus your receptive conscious mind in such a way that it becomes

a receiver of thoughts and ideas pertaining to the need you have designated.

Meditation constitutes an act of stilling your body and mind, of isolating them from the usual stimuli that ordinarily hold their attention, so that the mind becomes receptive to higher influences, usually from the High Self. To meditate means to become quiet in a mentally receptive way, to release the tensions of body and mind, to strengthen the connection between your conscious mind and the High Self, or between you and the Infinite. Meditation is a way of access to your Self's potentials -- not only inspiration but strength, assurance and similar qualities.

A simple way to meditate is merely to become quiet and relaxed. You may be aided in this process by Astar's meditation recordings, specifically created for this purpose. You may begin your meditation with a prayer, or any bit of scripture or literature that helps you become inwardly peaceful. Do not attempt to think about a problem. Concentrate upon improving your relationship with your Self, or with Cosmic Mind, or with God.

Let the length of time during which you meditate be determined by your feeling at the moment. Don't be insistent upon an answer to a problem during the meditation period. Meditation for its own purpose as a helpful activity should be your only consideration. Remember that meditation is an art that requires regular practice, an art to be developed. Do not expect to be proficient at the first trial any more than you would expect to play a difficult piano selection the first time you sat at the instrument.

As your meditative reveries become deeper you will gain more and more from them. But meditation is a completely personal activity, each person engaging in it in a different way and with different results.

Now for the seemingly unrelated aspects of meditation.

Breath. The word *inspire* means to inbreathe. Mystics long ago noted a relationship between breath and the kind of inspiration we are discussing.

From a purely physical standpoint, breath is an obvious essential. Yet it has other than purely physical effects. A few deep breaths before beginning an

important activity calms nerves and emotions and enables you to think more clearly. The effects of deep breathing go beyond physical responses. Public speakers, actors and athletes have discovered this time and time again.

To breathe deeply, consciously and deliberately serves to coordinate your entire being, helps bring yourself under control, helps focus your talents and attributes upon a single, specific activity.

To engage in a program of breathing exercises is one of the best possible methods of opening channels for the Self to impress its impulses upon your conscious mind. As a "pump-primer" for inspiration, it has no equal. Astara's Lama Yoga discipline, explained in the First Degree, presents an excellent method of engaging in a breathing exercise which has produced remarkable results.

For a simple productive breathing discipline, merely sit quietly for a few moments until you are completely relaxed. Then slowly exhale through the mouth, forcing all the air from your lungs by contracting the muscles of your diaphragm. Then slowly inhale through the nostrils while expanding the diaphragm until your lungs are completely filled. Repeat the process five or six times.

You are most likely to notice an immediate release of tension in your entire being, coupled with an inflow of well-being physically, emotionally and mentally. More about breathing methods will be included in lesson 6 of this series.

Brain stimulation. Just as exercise strengthens muscles, thought stimulates and improves mental activity. Researchers have discovered that the more you think the more you are able to think.

Though muscles become depleted of energy, the mind never gets tired. However the instrument of the mind, the brain, does lose its energy and thereby inhibits mental activity, for the mind is able to function properly only through its instrument. It is the brain that becomes tired, not the mind.

Therefore anything you can do to stimulate the brain enables your mind (and thus your Self) the better to express its thoughts. Mind stimulation is a mental activity. Because the brain is a physical object, brain stimulation is a physical activity.

It has been my experience that the best way to stimulate the brain is to increase the quantity of blood that feeds the nerve cells of which it is composed. The ancient yogis discovered this, and included various head-stand exercises in their disciplines. Several modern athletes, champions in their fields, regularly engage in head-stands. They find it helps them coordinate mental and muscular reactions and increases mental alertness.

It isn't always easy to engage in head-stands, so I have adopted the modern and easier alternative of using a slant-board. A slant-board is simply a padded board on which one lies with his feet raised about 18 inches higher than his head. If no slant-board is available a substitute is easily made with pillows on a divan or bed.

I have found that five to ten minutes daily on my slant-board produces remarkable results in clearer thinking, more creative thinking, better physical well-being, and more frequent intuitive experiences. To save time I often engage in a breathing exercise while reclining on the slant-board. I believe that these two methods help trigger my inspiration and, if you will experiment with them, I sincerely believe you will discover them to be an excellent method of aiding your Self to become more productive in your life.

In short, you can breathe a healthy body and an alert mind, and with brain stimulation you can open the channel for further inspiration. Attention, awareness and meditation contribute still further to the entire process. But exactly what does it all bring forth?

PRACTICE THE ETERNAL RELIGION

One might say that while man has created many forms of religion they all have one basic purpose, or should have, though it is far too often lost sight of in the creation of the forms themselves. Religion should help you fulfill your Self. In the final analysis it has no other purpose. Man has adulterated it to mean a method of being saved from errors. Religion should not be a defense but a method of fulfillment.

The King James version of the Bible gives us Jesus' words on the cross as being: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This seems incongruous to me, for he must have known he was not forsaken.

In his translation from the Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, Dr. George Lamsa tells us the words should be: "My God, for this I was kept." In other words, this was my destiny, my fulfillment...that through my life I might reveal the meaning of life. Thus, it was not considered as the conclusion of life but a part of the process of Self fulfillment.

In the Hindu tradition, Hinduism is considered to mean: "The eternal religion that continues to reveal itself through the ages."

And my study of the Self leads me to the conclusion that it is an entity that wishes to continue to reveal itself eternally. It is always engaged in this timeless revelation. It does so through the mission of your present life. The knowledge of that mission is the third Vital Idea, and we will explore it in all its personal meaning for you in our next lesson, *Know Your Mission*.

